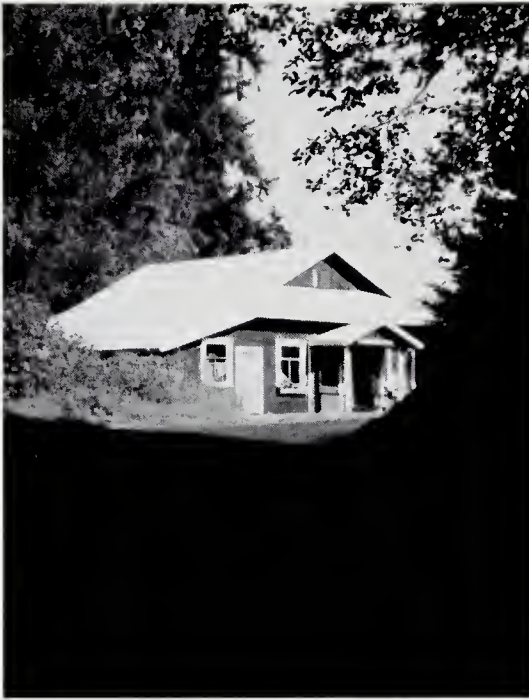


CLATSOP COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

CUMTUX



Vol. 20, No. 3 – Summer 2000



**Simonson Loop Road
in the Svensen Area.
The old Finnish Socialist
Hall, built in 1922, is still
standing.**

Photo courtesy of the Editor

THE IRON CURTAIN

The iron curtain (the imaginary line between the familiar world and the world of the communists) was located at the junction of Svensen Road with Highway 30, or so it seemed to me as a child of eleven. Up Svensen Road was the home of my aunt's sister-in-law and her husband, an elderly Finnish couple who were passionate advocates for communism, "Uncle" Antti (Andrew) and "Aunt" Riispi.

My sister, Karen, and I and our friend, Lea, a grand niece of the old couple, spent the day on their Svensen farm occasionally, picking the little wild blackberries along the edge of the road, then learning from Riispi the magic of turning flour, water, and shortening into pie crusts and a delicious dessert.

We must have taken our cue from other adults in our lives because we treated the couple as merely eccentric. We listened to their lectures on the "proletariat" and the "ruling classes," but as soon as possible, we changed the subject. The lectures we heard seemed as stale as the weevil infested flour we sometimes found on Riispi's shelves.

Almost fifty years have passed since then. Riispi and Antti are both long gone. Highway 30 has been re-routed and no longer passes the junction where we imagined the iron curtain to be. And now, after all these years, it occurs to me to wonder how it was that my mother, whose brother was wounded in the war against Russia, and Lea's family, who had lost their home in Finnish Karelia to the Russians, sometimes drove us through that curtain to visit that other world.

This issue of *Cumtux* will explore some aspects of the early years of socialists and communists in Clatsop County.

Many thanks go to the Hummasti family, Zoe Ulshen, Marlene Taylor, Naimi Koskelo, Susan Lewis, Viola Abrahamson, Carleton Appelo, Bob Peterson, George Harrison, and Dick Thompson, for their help with this issue.

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CUMTUX

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Front Cover: *Saima Sophia Kansala Saarinen, an actress at the Socialist Hall in Astoria, about 1917, the year she married Frank Saarinen.*
Gann Studio, Astoria

Printer: Anchor Graphics
Astoria, Oregon

CUMTUX: Chinook jargon:
"To know...acknowledge...to inform"

THE NEW HOME LAND

By George Hummasti

The historical research I have done on Finnish Socialists in Astoria stems from a personal interest: all four of my grandparents were involved with organized Finnish socialism in Clatsop County.

The Konttas family of Astoria

My mother's parents, Jacob "Jaska" and Maija Konttas, were long-standing and active members of the Astoria Finnish Socialist Club. Like most Finnish immigrants to America, they had no connection to socialism in Finland (Although the movement was becoming popular among Finns at the same time that emigration from Finland was strongest). My grandfather used to say that in the old country, he "didn't know socialism from rheumatism." The initial attraction of the Finnish Socialist movement in America was for them, as for most of the large number of American Finns who became Socialists, the multitude of cultural and social activities that it provided. These activities gave lonely immigrants a place to be among familiar customs and familiar faces in the alien environment of America. My grandparents dived enthusiastically into these activities when they arrived in Astoria in 1911. My grandfather played coronet in the Socialist club orchestra and was one of the most active members of the drama club. My grandmother also performed many roles in the many plays produced by the club and she enjoyed immensely the regular dances that the club sponsored. When they arrived in Astoria with three young kids, the magnificent five-story Socialist hall had just been built, so my mother and her brother and sister, literally grew up at the Hall. In addition to being there regularly

for meetings, rehearsals, dances, concerts, and plays, they came to the Hall to celebrate family holidays such as birthdays and Christmas in the communal manner of the Finnish country village. There they could share a smoke or the latest gossip (in Finnish) with neighbors. There, they could comfortably be themselves, practicing familiar habits and customs. There children could play together, and the young folks could flirt and perhaps find that special some one. The last gathering of Socialists in the Hall before it burned to the ground in 1923 was a personal celebration (albeit a sad one) – the funeral of my mother's brother, George.

Although social and cultural events were most important, most members of the club also supported Socialist politics. As immigrants, most of them were near the bottom of the American economic scale and saw in the Socialist ideology a hope to improve conditions for workers in America. Even my dance-loving grandmother felt the need for serious political action, often asking critically if Astoria Finnish Socialists thought they could "dance their way to the White House." My grandfather was a fervent supporter of the presidential candidate of the Socialist Party of America, Eugene V. Debbs, whom he considered a great man and an eloquent speechmaker. He liked to point out proudly that by the 1960s, fourteen of the sixteen main planks of the Socialist party platform of Debbs' time had been enacted into law by non-Socialist politicians.

It was politics that caused my grandparents to leave the Finnish Socialist Club. In the early 1920s, the Com-



Courtesy of the Hummasti Family
The Konttas Family: Mary and Jaska (Jacob) with their daughters, Irma at left, and Helmi, right, and son, George.



Courtesy of the Hummasti Family

The Hummasti Family

Emmi and Aapo (Abram) Hummasti with their daughter Selma (Sally) and sons, left to right: Bill, Henry and Paul. The photo was taken in 1932 before their trip to Karelia. Paul remained in the U.S. and helped his parents and sister return here.

munist Party of America, with which it was now affiliated, put increasing pressure on Finnish-American Socialists to espouse more radical politics and to put more emphasis on political rather than social activities. Neither of these demands pleased my grandparents, who quit the club and shifted their energies to the Finnish Brotherhood, where social and cultural activities still held center stage.

The Hummasti Family of Svensen

My father's parents, Abram "Aapo" and Emmi Hummasti, belonged to the Svensen Finnish Socialist organization in the late 1920s when it was affiliated with the Communist Party of America.

In 1932, they and three of their four grown children joined thousands of Finnish-Americans in migrating to Soviet Karelia. Like most of the Finns who left America for the Soviet Union, they probably felt themselves to be pioneers helping to build the new Communist homeland in Russia, as the Communist Party of America was advertising it, but more importantly, their decision to go was based on Communist claims that good jobs and comfortable living conditions awaited all in the new Communist state. Petroskoi [Petrosovodsk] the capitol of Soviet Karelia, they claimed was such a clean city that there were spittoons on every street corner. In the early 1930s, as

America was sinking into the deepest depression it had known, this was a powerful inducement to pack up and leave for something better. After all, these were people who had already once left homes in Finland for better lives in America; to do so again, especially when the promise of America seemed to be fading, was not such a big step, particularly when it involved moving to a place where a dialect of Finnish was spoken.

My grandparents and their family were put to work at Luostari, a former monastery converted into a lumber camp. There they slept in the winter church, which had been converted into a dormitory. My uncle remembered sleeping near the altar, looking up at the religious paintings on the ceiling.

Soon, however, they became disenchanted with the poverty, the primitive conditions, and especially with the petty bureaucratic restrictions, that characterized Soviet Karelia at this time. Most bothersome of all was the constant insecurity. When my grandparents arrived in Karelia, they were told to turn in their passports to get visas. A friend told them, however, that if they did so, they would lose their passports and become Soviet citizens. They did not turn them in, but were in constant fear that at any moment their passport might be taken away, along with their chance of ever leaving. Like many Finnish-Americans in Karelia, they soon made plans to leave and return to America. Unlike many, however, their plans were fulfilled and about ten weeks after arriving in Karelia, they left for Finland. After living with relatives there for some time, they were able to return to Svensen.

Unlike most of the lucky immigrants who succeeded in returning from Karelia, my grandfather was not content to forget his suffering and remain silent. He wrote to leading Finnish-American newspapers charging Finnish Communist leaders of luring unsuspecting Finnish-Americans to Soviet Karelia with lies

about the economic paradise that awaited there. This was a charge the Finnish-American Communists could not take lightly. For several months, a debate raged in Finnish American newspapers over whether Abram Hummasti was a selfish traitor to the cause of the international working class, who betrayed the Soviet Union because it did not make him rich, or whether Finnish-American Communist leaders had indeed lied about conditions in Karelia in order to recruit unwary Finnish-Americans to migrate there and provide their labor to build its economy. In a short time, however, the controversy died, and my grandfather returned to being an obscure chicken farmer in Svensen.

By the time I knew my grandparents, their involvement with radicalism was far behind them. I am sure, however, that their earlier, intense experiences with the Finnish-American Socialist movement did much to make them the people that I knew. ♦

The Author

George Hummasti is the author of *Radical Finns in Astoria: 1904-1940, A Study in Immigrant Socialism*. Arno Press, 1979, "Ethnicity and Radicalism: The Finns of Astoria and the Toveri, 1890-1930," *The Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Winter 1995-96, pages 362-393, and "The Establishment of the Finnish Settlement in Astoria, Oregon: A Look at Community Development," in *Finnish Americana: Vol. 1*, (1978), New York Mills, MN, pages 85 to 98.

George Hummasti received his Ph.D. from the University of Oregon and is currently teaching at Southwest Missouri State University.

See page 36 of this issue for more on the Hummasti Family.



Timeline from *Finnish Radicals in Astoria, Oregon**



Notes by Zoe Ulshen



- 1850s Finns first came to Astoria
- 1890-1914 Period of greatest immigration to the US
- 1899 First truly Marxist association for Finnish-Americans founded in Rockport, MA
- 1904 Astoria Socialist Club founded (*Astoria Suomalainen Sosialisti Klubi*) (ASSK)
- 1906 30 local Finnish-American socialist groups met and formed the Finnish Socialist Federation (*Suomalainen Sosialistijärjestö*) (SSJ) and sought a formal connection with the Socialist Party of America (SPA)
- 1907 *Toveri* (Comrad) was first published
- 1908 Finnish-American businessmen conducted a national campaign against socialism through mass meetings, including one in Astoria, to demonstrate that there were many Finnish-Americans opposed to socialism. This was the only nationally organized attack on Finnish-American socialism.
- 1908 Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) advocated revolution through radical action in the industrial sphere and renounced political activity as a means of achieving a workers' state. Response to the IWW created the first of many internal schisms among Finnish-American radicals.
- 1911 Finnish Socialist Hall was dedicated. It gave a huge boost to ASSK activities since it was the second largest hall in Astoria.
- 1914-1918 WWI
- 1915 Radical Finnish-Americans in Astoria founded a Marxist Club
- 1917 Russian Revolution and Bolshevik Revolution
- 1917 Ship building for WWI made Astoria's small ship building industry into big business, thus creating Astoria's first industrial work force. Coast-wide shipyard strike joined by Astoria work force.
- 1918-19 Trial of *Toveri* employees under War-Time Espionage Act.
- 1918 Finnish Civil War
- 1919 American Legion post established in Astoria. The post led a boycott of advertising in *Toveri*.
- 1919 The Socialist Party of America split, and the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party were formed. They later merged into the Communist Party of America (CPA).
- 1921 The Workers Party of America (WPA) was founded as the legal, parliamentary branch of the communist movement in America.
- 1922 The SSJ joined the WPA and then formally joined the CPA. Finns were the most numerous ethnic group within that organization.
- 1923 Finnish Socialist Hall burned down in Astoria.
- 1924 The Bureau of the Workers Party Finnish Faction replaced the SSJ.
- 1926 The *Astorian Suomalainen Työläisten Klubi* (Finnish Workers Club)

(ASTK) — a communist local – replaced the ASSK in Astoria. Street-level cells were organized, but only a minority of Astoria's Finnish communists joined them.

- 1927 The *Suomalainen Työväen Järjestö* (Finnish Workers Federation) (STJ) was founded. It was identical in policy and organization to the SSJ but was completely subordinated to the CPA and Comintern.
- 1931 *Toveri* ordered to stop publishing by the STJ. The ASTK was no longer the largest local in the West and Astorian Finnish communists ceased to have significant influence over the communists in the area.
- 1939 USSR non-aggression pact with Germany followed by invasion of Finland. American-Finnish communist support of the invasion completed their isolation from the Finnish community.
- 1941 The STJ, recognizing its impotence, dissolved. Although the Astorian local became a lodge in the International Workers Order (IWO) (a fraternal communist order), it had no influence within the local Finnish community. For all practical purposes, Finnish-American radicalism in Astoria was dead.

**Finnish Radicals in Astoria, Oregon: 1904-1940, A Study in Immigrant Socialism* was written by Paul George Hummasti and printed by Arno Press in 1979. A copy of the book is available at the Astoria Public Library.



Additional Notes from *Radical Finns in Astoria, Oregon: 1904-1940*

A few reasons why Finns were predisposed to socialism.

1. Finnish peasants were “born free.” There were no feudal institutions like those in Europe. Finnish peasants were impatient with threats to their independence and lacked the reverence for authority seen in other European peasant groups.
2. This lack of respect for authority was seen as a peasant virtue as Russia tried to increase her power over Finland in the 1890s. As the upper and middle classes resisted Russification, nationalism flourished; they invited peasants and workingmen to join their resistance making radicalism more acceptable to normally conservative peasants.
3. The living conditions of peasants instilled in them a sense of the value of cooperation with their neighbors in order to farm effectively. As a result, the cooperative movement became a very important part of Finnish economics.

Although Finnish-American society was complex and split into multiple groups just like any society, the most fundamental split by 1905 was between Socialists and Church Finns (businessmen and many fishermen who had a conservative view of life). Socialists and Church Finns did work together on multiple issues: the temperance movement, cooperative movements in the Finnish community and the Finnish Brotherhood, which by refusing to get involved in political problems, was most successful in bringing the two groups together.



CCHS Photo #21,041-540

From 1910 to 1923, the Socialist Hall stood where the Dunes Motel is now on Marine Dr. in Astoria. This photo probably dates to about 1918 or later as that was when the organization was compelled to fly the American flag. (*Morning Astorian*, Dec. 1, 1918) The building originally cost \$15,000. Note the Workers' Bureau at left.

ASTORIA'S FINNISH SOCIALIST CLUB

The following is a loose translation of an article in Toveri: Kymmenvuotias, 1907-1917. (The 10 year anniversary issue of the Toveri newspaper.) This book was published by the Toveri Press at Astoria, Oregon in 1917. The article is a history of the first ten years of the Astoria Finnish Socialist Club.

About eighteen miles from the Pacific Ocean on the Columbia River, there is a manufacturing place, the city of Astoria, which time has left behind. The main occupation of the inhabitants is fishing. Thousands of people have congregated to this town. They had tried their luck in other American industrial places, but they found that the work in American factories and mines was just as it was in the homeland they had left. They were hoping that the fishermen's lives would be more free and they would not have to listen to the bellows of cruel bosses. But their disappointment came right away. First, they had to put their lives at risk when they went out on the Columbia River, just as they did in the factories and mines. But change did take place though they took the initiative. The bosses (in the canneries) would not give in so there began a period of strikes by the fishermen. The big one in the beginning of 1894 was about a pay raise. [This date appears to be an error. The strike was in 1896.] On that occasion, the cannery owners used the military against the fishermen and crushed the strike. When the strike failed, the fishermen finally began to listen to the people in the labor

movement urging all the nation's workers to unite. Little by little the idea got through to the fishermen and the organizational meeting of the socialists took place in 1904. They weren't aware of class consciousness then, but were tired of the way the churches controlled them. They wanted more opportunity. Only a small group understood that gaining freedom wasn't the only goal, but they needed freedom from wage slavery by battling the class system. A few of them understood what they were aiming for so they organized the A.S.S.K* with twenty-seven members. After ten years, only two are left, Frank Niemi and Tom Hihnala. The others either moved away or left because they disagreed with the beliefs of the organization. *The A.S.S.K. was the Astorian Suomalainen Sosialisti Klubi (Astoria Finnish Socialist Club).

There have been people who have come into the organization bringing it new strength. The early workers were a little timid about expressing their ideas because they found it difficult to stand up to resistance they faced. But against all odds, the organization's activities have gotten stronger. Members started working on educating people about socialism. They had evening programs for the public at which they discussed problems of society. Because of these evening programs, more and more people started to come to the meetings. At first, it was curiosity that brought them in. Then when they began to understand about socialism, the membership climbed and then later these people became staunch



Courtesy of the Editor

Uniontown about 1914. Looking east from the port docks in Astoria. The large building at center is the Socialist Hall. At left is Suomi Hall, then owned by the Temperance Society who moved it from Alameda to Taylor (Marine Drive) in 1910. The large building on the hill at right is Taylor School. The Finnish Congregational Church is to the left. On the far left is the Union Fishermen's Cooperative Packing Company's cannery.

socialists. When that happens, they usually want to start a newspaper so that they can write about the world's happenings. This way, the labor force would get good information about their own class. That is the kind of newspaper they wanted in Astoria. They weren't satisfied with the middle class views. At first there wasn't any other way to do it and so their paper was hand written. *Pisara* was the name of the newspaper. The first issue was given to members in 1905. This was the Western Finnish Socialist organization's voice, a precursor to the *Toveri* which soon followed. The *Toveri* was organized on February 27, 1907 and its first issue appeared on December 7, 1907.

The Hall

The socialist organization first was limited in the manner they promoted their ideas. They had promotional evenings and lectures. Among the lecturers were: Taavi Tainio, Kaapo Murros, Mooses Hahl and Santeri Nuorteva. The most prominent was Santeri Nuorteva. He lectured from 1912 to 1915. Awareness of socialist ideas increased. That was about the time that they began to consider building their own hall. They wanted to get their own meeting place because of problems they had with the local middle class people who did not want to rent them rooms. It took a lot of work [described as hairpulling]. It had been a nuisance from the beginning, not having their own meeting place. Properties belonged to the old local conservative landowners. They tried all kinds of tricks to keep the Socialists from having a place to meet. The first time they started to talk about building their own place was in 1905 and it was on the agenda until the 27th of January, 1905 when they decided to buy a lot for the place. It was a good start and things rolled along after that. In May of the same year, they elected a building committee and started fast. They moved under their own roof on March 16, 1911. Since that time the organization's great looking doors have been

open to organized labor and their brothers.

The Choir

Organized labor everywhere has set up activities for their own organizations and so it was with the Astoria group. They started a choir, which was organized on December 6, 1905. The choir has been active ever since, though less active in the summers. The choir directors have been: J. Paananen, K. Paananen, H. Rintala, Rosy Lemberg, K. Rautio and Jukka Makirinne.

The Theater

The theater was organized on March 4, 1908. It has been active ever since and has brought in a lot of money to the organization. At the same time people got a lot of enjoyment from the various performances. Some programs were especially high-grade. Theater directors have included: Annie Mork,* Matti Lahdenpera, Lauri Lemberg, Rosy Lemberg,** Frank Niemi, Sanni Nuorteva, Anna Parras, Aino Eloranta, Eero Boman and Kaarlo Nissinen.

The Orchestra

The orchestra was organized in 1908. It performed every time they could find enough people to play, though sometimes it was just the horn section. Now they have both a band and an orchestra actively performing. Directors have included: Lindfors, Laukola, K. Rautio*** and Jukka Makirinne.

Sports and Gymnastics

These groups have been active whenever the people interested in them have kept them going. They didn't keep directors that were paid.

The Sewing Club

This women's group started at the beginning. They were able to socialize at the same time and participate in education. They made quite a bit of money for the organization.

Speakers Bureau

This group's job was to enhance the spiritual development of the organization with socialistic ideas. It has been very



Courtesy of the Editor

William Nikolai Reivo, (born in 1883), editor of the *Toveri* from 1913 to 1920, with his wife, Sanni, and son. He was found guilty of espionage and went to McNeil Island penitentiary in 1920, but served only about a year when he was pardoned by President Wilson. He then returned to the *Toveri*. He later worked for the U.S. Department of State in New York, in charge of Finnish language broadcasting for the Office of War Information to Finland from 1942-1945. In those years, Russia was an ally of the U.S. and until August 1944, Finland was allied with Germany.

good for the organization because it educated the people and developed their class consciousness. The group doesn't function in the summer, though. The long, rainy winter months are more suitable.

Shops

There are stores on the ground floor. Members buy clothing and tobacco there so they don't have to patronize people hostile to labor organizations. The stores helped to pay for the loan on the building. Directors have been Evert Lindfors, Vaino Wainio and Mikko Rinta.

Conclusion

The whole organization has stayed true to the Marxist ideals. There were times in the history of the Astoria Socialist organization that were a little stormy. We hope all disputes will end and every-

one will do his duty as a working class people. If everyone just pulls together, the revolution will take place and equality will not be far down the road.

*Years later, after Annie Mork had returned to Finland, she appeared often in the theater at Turku. Our translator, Naimi, saw her perform many times and said that she was very talented.

**The story of Rosa and Lauri Lemberg appeared in the Spring 1993 issue of *Cumtux*, on page 20.]

***According to an article by Mayme Sevander in the March 1998 issue of *Finnish-American Reporter* (page 16), two sons of Kalle Rautio of Astoria died in a storm on Lake Onega in Karelia. The *Reporter* was published until recently by the Tyomies Society in Superior, Wisconsin.

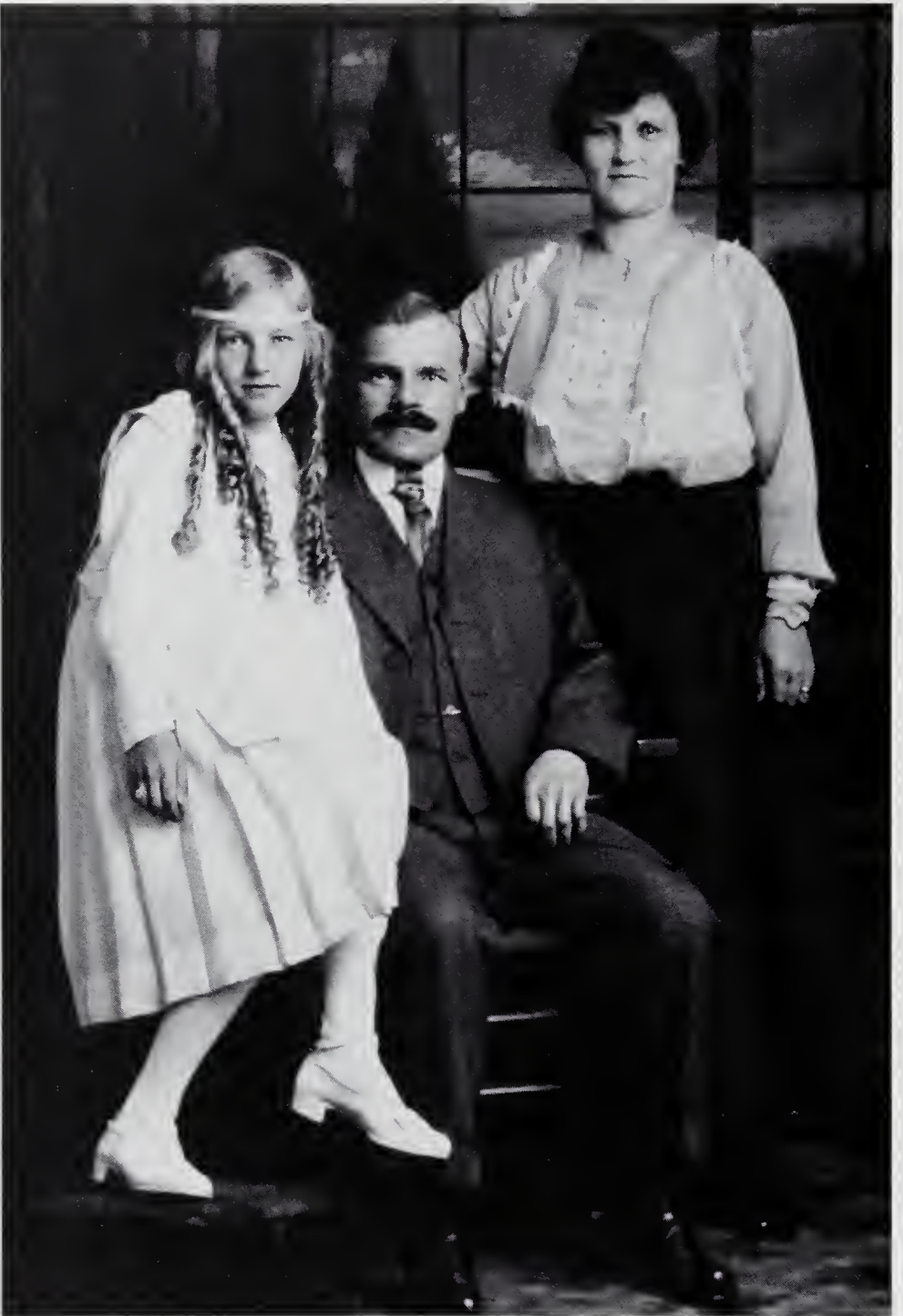


SVENSEN'S SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION

Astoria's group sent J. Hannula to help with the organizational meeting of the socialists in Svensen on May 17, 1914. The founding members of that lodge were: Carl Insel, Alex Lindfors, John Koski, Kate Takkunen, Matti Aula and A.V. Virta. On the last Sunday's meeting of the same month, there were about ten more members entering the lodge. It looked promising that so many new members were there. Almost thirty people had shown up and all were enthusiastic. They had their meetings twice a month with programs at alternate meetings. The enthusiasm didn't last, though. After a year, membership had fallen to half and there have been about ten to eighteen members ever since. They have work meetings depending on their current project. Even though they don't have their own meeting place, they have continued to meet and they have raised finances for promotion when possible.

People here are newcomers, so they work hard like country people with *sisu*,* hoping for brighter days to come, cutting away the brambles to clear the fields and build homes in these backwoods.

**Sisu* is the Finnish word for "perseverance" or "grit."



Courtesy of the Editor

Oscar and Alina Jamsa and their daughter. The family was active in the Socialist theater in Astoria. The photo dates to about 1915. The Jamsa's and Hyske's also appear in the centerfold photo.



Courtesy of the Editor

John Felix Hyske and wife, Aino, and their daughter Resu. Felix was born in Turku, Finland in 1877 and was a former director of the Workers' Theater there. He was also an actor and one of the last professional directors of the Socialist theater in Astoria. Daughter Resu was also an actress as a child. See the Finnish-American Historical Society's *Theater Finns*, (1972) page 25.



The Finnish Socialist Band, about 1919.

Courtesy of the Editor



Courtesy of the Editor

The Finnish Socialist Male Choir at Astoria about 1915. Second from left is Frank Niemi. 6th from left is Antti Suttinen.



Courtesy of the Editor
William Lammi at left is the only one identified in this photo of the winners of an athletic competition in the Socialist Athletic Club. Lammi was a long-time resident of Uniontown. Wilson Studio Photo.

SOCIALISTS IN CLATSOP COUNTY IN 1914



By Liisa Penner



The 1914 *Register of Electors for Astoria and Clatsop County* (a two volume set) lists political party, the place of birth, and place of residence, among other bits of information, for those were registered to vote in the county. A list of those registered as "Socialist" follows.

A typed copy of these books is available in the CCHS Archives and the Astoria Public Library. The original books are in the Clatsop County Clerk's Office in the courthouse in Astoria (the basement vault).

Numbers are given for the Astoria precincts starting in the west. Uniontown was 1, Alderbrook was 12.

There is some duplication of names.

Notes:

(1.) Not all Finns were Socialists. More than twice as many Finns were registered as Republicans than as Socialists in 1914.

(2.) Some of those listed as Socialist below joined the party, not for political concerns, but for the social activities offered (theater, orchestra, and choir). Some members left the party disagreeing over policy or other issues. Some became vocal opponents.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Precinct</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Place/Birth</i>
Aaltonen, John	1	fisherman	34	Finland
Aarnio, Oscar	10	sawmill man	22	Finland
Ahlskog, Isak Erik	2	salesman	34	Finland
Aho, Herman	2	tailor	48	Finland
Aho, Hilda	2	housewife	39	Finland
Alakkala, Matt	2	fisherman	32	Finland
Anderson, Aug	12	fisherman	53	Sweden
Anderson, John	2	plumber	42	Finland
Anttila, John	Hamlet	rancher	42	Russia
Anttila, John	1	merchant	31	Finland
Askeli, Henry	2	newspaper	28	Finland
Bergman, Julius	Knappa	carpenter	47	Germany
Bowman, Sara G.	7	housewife	28	Montana
Bush, Thomas	Knappa	farmer	70	England
Carlson, Estelle	Seaside	housewife	32	Iowa
Carlson, George	5	baker	27	Sweden
Cline, W.F.	Knappa	engineer	31	New York
Correr, Santford	Westport	rancher	40	Missouri

Cronin, Ella	3	housewife	36	Iowa
Culver, C.B.	Seaside	carpenter	46	Iowa
Culver, C.B.	Seaside	engineer	47	Iowa
Degernas, H.A.	Svensen	farmer	29`	Russia
Dimick, C.H.	Blind Slough	logger	24	Oregon
Drift, Thos	1	fisherman	33	Finland
Dunsmon, Sara	Svensen	housewife	32	Nebraska
Dunsmoor, J.R.	Svensen	mechanic	51	Minnesota
Ek, Eliel Edward	1	tinsmith	30	Finland
Ekoos, Laurents	11	housewife	48	Norway
Ekoos, Benj.	11	teamster	51	Norway
Ennis, A.G.	Knappa	carpenter	32	Missouri
Erickson, Henrietta	New Astoria	housewife	27	N Zealand
Erikson, Matti	10	laborer	33	Finland
Falls, John	1	laborer	34	Finland
Fischer, Albert	12	fisherman	45	Sweden
Getaz, Louis	Knappa	harnessmaker	76	Switz.
Greenland, Wm.	5	painter	58	England
Gunnari, Tobias	2	bookkeeper	33	Norway
Haarala, Charles	10	millhand	42	Finland
Haglund, Chas.	Knappa	farmer	63	Sweden
Haglund, John	Knappa	logger	28	Oregon
Haglund, Victor	Knappa	logger	31	Oregon
Hahn, Robt.	5	logger	30	N Car.
Hahto, Antti	1	fisherman	22	Finland
Hahto, Salmo	1	fisherman	27	Finland
Halonon, J.M.	12	housekeeper	27	Wash.
Halonon, Matt	12	carpenter	30	Finland
Hamala, Henry	1	laborer	30	Finland
Hamala, Hilda	1	housewife	27	Finland
Hamilton, R.L.	5	longshoreman	31	Missouri
Hannula, David	1	hotel keeper	40	Finland
Harvey, Emma M.	Seaside	housewife	24	Iowa
Harvey, L.A.	Seaside	carpenter	23	Nebraska
Haycox, T.J.	Seaside	painter	74	New York
Heckard, Joseph A.	Seaside	steam engineer	45	Oregon
Heino, Henry Vaino	Hamlet	rancher	56	Finland
Heino, Walfred	10	barber	30	Finland
Hendrickson, C.	Knappa	farmer	51	Finland
Hendrickson, Jacob	1	fisherman	42	Finland
Hermer, C.F.	Seaside	laborer	37	Indiana
Hill Oscar	2	no occ	53	Finland
Hoag, James W.	2	laborer	28	Oregon
Huotari, Chas.	10	fisherman	24	Finland
Hutchinson, Lucille	Seaside	housewife	36	Illinois
Huttula, Hannes	1	bookkeeper	28	Finland
Huttunen, Ilmari	10	laborer	33	Finland
Hyrskymurto, J.K.	1	carpenter	27	Finland

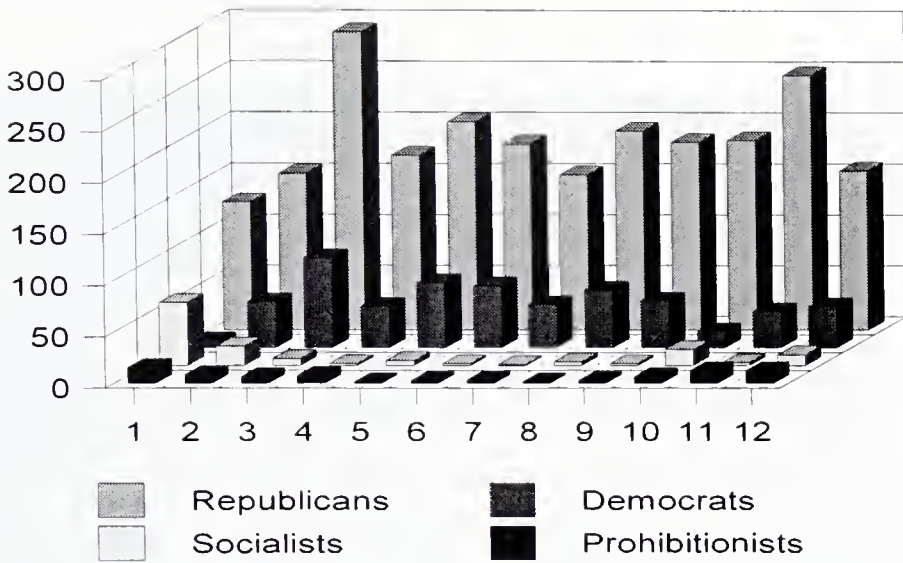
Jacobson, Aug I.	Youngs River	farmer	40	Finland
Joensuu, Oskar	Youngs River	farmer	39	Finland
Johnson, Andrew	Hamlet	rancher	57	Finland
Johnson, Ole G.	Knappa	farmer	58	Norway
Johnston, C.N.	Seaside	carpenter	56	Nebraska
Joki, Charles	1	teamster	27	Finland
Jopila, John	1	laborer	32	Finland
Juhola, Oskari	10	fisherman	29	Finland
Juola, Antti	1	fisherman	31	Finland
Jylha, John	1	fisherman	40	Finland
Kaakinen, John H.	1	carpenter	29	Finland
Kaartinen, Anna S.	Chadwell	farmer	45	Finland
Kamera, Isak	Chadwell	farmer	49	Finland
Kamminen, Yrjo	10	laborer	26	Finland
Karhunsaaari, John P.	1	fisherman	35	Finland
Karinkanto, Charles	1	fisherman	32	Finland
Kelley, Clyde	Warrenton	canneryman	--	Oregon
Kessler, L.M.	8	shingleweaver	47	Iowa
Kingam, J.J.	Seaside	blacksmith	31	Indiana
Kokko, K.	10	laborer	26	Finland
Konttas, Jacob W.	1	painter	32	Finland
Konttas, Mary	1	housewife	29	Finland
Koskela, John K.	1	fisherman	30	Finland
Koski, Israel	1	tailor	29	Finland
Kroger, Samson	12	fisherman	60	Norway
Kuivala, J.W.	10	laborer	21	Finland
Lahti, John	Svensen	carpenter	37	Finland
Lahti, Niilo	1	fisherman	24	Finland
Laito, Oscar	1	laborer	29	Finland
Lammi, Jooseppi	9	printer	23	Finland
Larsen, Hans	Warrenton	bridgetender	38	Denmark
Lassila, Paul	10	fisherman	24	Finland
Laukki, Esther	2	editor	28	Finland
Lindgren, Edward	1	shoemaker	31	Finland
Lindroos, Alex	Svensen	carpenter	32	Russia
Lindstrom, C.G.	John Day	fisherman	42	Sweden
Lindstrom, Fred	12	carpenter	55	Sweden
Loomis, G.M.	12	machinist	30	Ohio
Lopakka, Sakri	1	fisherman	30	Finland
Lundstrom, A.	1	carpenter	29	Finland
Makela, Oskar	1	laborer	27	Finland
Malo, John	2	newspaper	36	Finland
Marks, Robert M.	Seaside	laborer	53	Indiana
Martinor, John	6	cook	24	Turkey
Matlin, A.	2	fisherman	27	Oregon
Mattila, Wilho	1	laborer	22	Finland
Mattson, Matti	10	millhand	42	Finland
McCollum, E.C.	Knappa	filer	37	Oregon

McCollum, E.C.	Knappa	logger	36	Oregon
Meibohn, Gerhard	New Astoria	watchman	68	Great Brit.
Mickelson, Aug	10	logger	49	Finland
Myers, Warren P.	New Astoria	laborer	25	California
Nelson, M.E.	Knappa	farmer	45	Sweden
Ness, Ole	4	carpenter	31	Norway
Nicholson, F.A.	Seaside	engineer	55	Penn
Nicholson, Gertrude	Seaside	housewife	49	Penn
Niemela, Charles	1	fisherman	36	Finland
Niemela, Kate	1	housewife	30	Finland
Niemi, Frank	1	fisherman	32	Finland
Niemi, Karl	1	fisherman	37	Finland
Niemi, Matt E.	1	fisherman	31	Finland
Niemi, Toini	1	housewife	27	Finland
Nilsson, E.R.E.	2	painter	48	Finland
Normand, Maria	3	clerk	47	Oregon
Olander, Nels	5	carpenter	39	Sweden
Olsen, John	1	fisherman	38	Finland
Olsen, Ole B.	12	fisherman	53	Sweden
Onkka, Alex	1	printer	21	Michigan
Overton, D.W.	Knappa	engineer	60	California
Paakkola, Jaakko	1	fisherman	27	Finland
Pakanen, Henry	2	laborer	24	Finland
Pakkala, Henry	10	laborer	28	Finland
Palo, Olaf	2	fisherman	44	Finland
Parras, John Emil	1	editor	30	Finland
Partanen, John	1	laborer	61	Finland
Pealle, J.A.	8	no occup	75	Finland
Peltola, Jalmar	10	laborer	29	Finland
Peterson, Ada	3	housewife	25	Illinois
Peterson, E.M.	Seaside	clerk	23	Calif
Peterson, R.	3	carpenter	34	Sweden
Rannells, D.N.	12	bookkeeper	24	Oregon
Rautio, Karl	1	janitor	28	Finland
Reeves, Elizabeth	Seaside	housewife	39	Kansas
Reeves, J.W.	Seaside	laborer	48	Iowa
Reinikka, Jack	1	fisherman	31	Finland
Richter, H.G.	Knappa	farmer	40	Missouri
Rouva, Chas	11	fisherman	52	Finland
Ryttonen, Ilmari	1	fisherman	26	Finland
Saari, Andrew	1	fisherman	30	Finland
Salmela, Carl J.	1	fisherman	35	Finland
Sandberg, John	1	fisherman	26	Finland
Siitanen, Heikki P.	1	laborer	21	Finland
Sjogren, Albertina	New Astoria	housekeeper	29	Oregon
Sloan, S.	Seaside	housewife	43	Missouri
Sloop, B.J.	3	merchant	43	Illinois
Sloper, Grace	Svensen	housewife	32	Oregon

Sloper, L.W.	Svensen	farmer	40	Oregon
Smith, W.W.	Seaside	laborer	36	Vermont
Spencer, Allen	Jewell	farmer	63	Iowa
Sponberg, A.E.	12	blacksmith	35	Sweden
Steele, W.Z.G.	Knappa	merchant	44	KY
Stevens, B.F.	Seaside	real estate	63	Illinois
Swander, R.C.	Knappa	carpenter	58	Ohio
Swanson, Eskil	4	painter	28	Sweden
Swanson, Otto A.	1	laborer	27	Finland
Thompson, August	1	carpenter	56	Finland
Thompson, C.W.	Seaside	retired	73	Penn
Thompson, E.M.	3	engineer	31	Missouri
Thompson, Mary	1	housewife	44	Norway
Tilbakka, Martha	3	tailor	41	Finland
Toivonen, Edward	1	laborer	27	Finland
Toyra, August	1		31	Finland
Turja, John	Svensen	laborer	36	Russia
Turva, F.A.	9	fisherman	28	Finland
Van Hyning, Florence	Clatsop	housewife	36	Ohio
Wainio, Waino W.	1	manager & treas.	34	Finland
Wainio, Wilhelmina	1	housewife	30	Finland
Weaver, A.	Knappa	laborer	54	England
Welch, J.F.	6	tailor	56	Illinois
Wiinamaki, John	10	clerk	31	Finland
Wiljamaa, John E.	1	painter	29	Finland
Wilkerson, J.E.	Warrenton	farmer	45	Virginia
Wilkerson, Martha	Warrenton	housewife	45	Illinois
Wilson, W.	2	fireman	29	Oregon
Wirta, William	1	sailor	29	Finland
Wood, L.B.	Warrenton	farmer	47	Oregon
Wuori, Antti	1	laborer	29	Finland
Yoder, L.H.	Seaside	carpenter	38	Missouri
Young, Elizabeth	12	housewife	70	Michigan
See note below	1	printer	28	Finland
"	1	housewife	21	Finland
"	8	housewife	32	Finland
"	8	business manager	33	Finland
"	2	fisherman	35	Finland
"	2	housewife	28	Finland

Out of 201 people in Clatsop County registered as Socialists, 105 were born in Finland, over 52 percent of the total. Twelve were born in Sweden, seven in Norway and four in Russia. (Those who gave Russia as their place of birth may actually have been born in Finland.) Seven people were born in Missouri and five in Illinois.

The names of the people at the end of the list were omitted at the request of relatives.



Political Parties of Registered Voters in Astoria by Precinct in 1914.

The chart above shows numbers of registered voters in the four largest political parties in Astoria. Numbers on the left represent the numbers of voters. Numbers at the bottom represent the precincts. 1 is in the west end of Astoria (Uniontown) and 12 is in the Alderbrook area, on the east end. The rest fall in between. The precincts were defined as follows:

- Precinct 1 – Smith Point, Taylor, Columbia streets, etc.
- Precinct 2 – Flavel, W. Bond, 1st Street, Washington St., etc.
- Precinct 3 – 3rd through the west side of 7th Street
- Precinct 4 – east side of 7th through the west side of 9th Street
- Precinct 5 – east side of 9th through the west side of 11th Street
- Precinct 6 – east side of 11th through the west side of 12th Street
- Precinct 7 – east side of 12th through the west side of 14th Street
- Precinct 8 – east side of 14th through the west side of 16th Street
- Precinct 9 – east side of 16th through 21st Street
- Precinct 10 – 29th through 31st streets
- Precinct 11 – 33rd through the west side of 38th Street
- Precinct 12 – east side of 38th through 53rd streets

The east and west ends of Astoria were the areas with the greatest numbers of voters in the Socialist and Temperance parties. Scandinavians and Finns made up most of the population in those areas. The central part of Astoria was home to large numbers of native born residents along with people from England, Scotland, and Germany.



Members of the Socialist theater group of the A.S.S.K. about 1919. At far left with his wife behind him and daughter Resu kneeling (wearing the finger curls) from the right in the back row. Next to him on the left is Mrs. Alina Jamsa. Her daughter is kneeling in the front row.

After politics split the Socialist groups, those leaning to the (political) right were called the "Finnish Socialists." See Walter Mattila's book, *Theater Finns* (printed by the Finnish-American Historical Society).

The Toveri Newspaper

Among the items in the CCHS collection is a copy of the *Toveri* newspaper from October 1, 1914. Copies of these newspapers are seldom seen and so are especially interesting. This paper, printed on a Thursday in the 7th year of publication, was proclaimed on the masthead, in English, as the "Organ of the Finnish Workers in the Western States. The Only Finnish Daily in the West." The rest of the newspaper is (as it promised) in Finnish. Because the non-Finnish speaking public did not understand what was printed in the paper, fears ballooned concerning activities that might be promoted among the anti-war, pro-union Socialists.

A copy of the paper, greatly reduced in size, appears opposite.

The headlines on the front page of this issue cover news from the European war from Germany, Paris, Brussels, England, Italy, with also news closer to home, from Montana.

Subscription rates in the U.S. and Canada were \$3.50 for one year, \$1.75 for six months, \$1.00 for three months and forty cents for one month. It was published daily, except Monday, at Astoria, Oregon, by the Western Workmen's Publishing Company. The advertising rate was forty cents an inch.

Local advertising in this issue of the paper was by:

First National Bank of Astoria (Jacob Kamm, W.F. McGregor,
G.C. Flavel, W. Ladd and S.S. Gordon)

Toivo Forstrom, physician, Spexarth Building

The Oregon Co-Operative Mercantile Association

Astoria Finnish Tannery Company at Youngs Bay, Taylor Street

Emil Ponkala, house and lot for sale, 243 Taylor

Raitanen & Wuori, tailors, Commercial Street

Otto Carlson, photographs, 1352 Franklin

The Aldon Store at 1348 Franklin, embroidery materials, & misc.

Jarvinen & Lehto's Royal Bakery on West Bond

Dr. H. Hartman, physician and surgeon, 573 Commercial

Henry Sutinen's "Pallorumma" (?), 241 Taylor St.

F.C. Johnson, "Scientific Optician"

Dr. T.O. Withers, eye doctor, 510 Commercial

Imperial Restaurant, 522 Commercial

The People's Clothing Store, 520 Commercial

The Workers' Bureau, 264 Taylor Ave.

Walter Kallunki, merchandise for men

Ads in this newspaper also came from businesses in Portland, Oregon; Aberdeen, Hoquiam, and Seattle, Washington; Fort Bragg, California; Hanna, Wyoming; and Butte and Red Lodge, Montana, places in the Western U.S.

A few years later, the American Legion led a boycott against the *Toveri's* advertisers.

This Book is a Sample of the Work of

The Western Workmen's Co-Op. Pub. Co.

At your service when you need anything in the Printing Line. We do all kinds of Job Printing and Book Binding. If You Want What You Want When You Want It at a Reasonable Price come
:-:- here or Phone 365. :-:-



Our New \$6,000.00 Press

When you don't advertise in the Daily Toveri, the Finnish People don't know that you are doing business, and it won't be long before you'll not know it yourself.

Circulation Larger Than All Other Astoria Papers Combined.
Advertising Rates on Application.

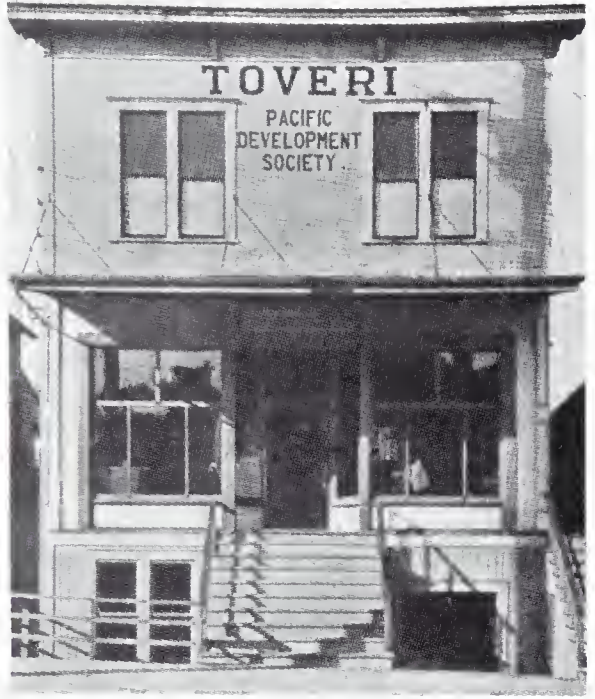
Western Workmen's Co-Op. Pub. Company

Tenth and Duane Streets
PUBLISHERS OF THE DAILY TOVERI

Courtesy of the Editor

An Advertisement in the 1913 Astoria High School yearbook.

Right: In 1919, the *Toveri* was evicted from the buildings in Astoria owned by Mr. Abelson of Chinook, Wash., and moved into this house at the corner of 7th and Commercial, owned by a Portland man.



Below: Workers at the *Toveri* and *Toveritar* newspapers in Astoria in 1913. The building was at 10th and Duane streets. At left is William Lammi. Esther Laukki, the editor of the women's Socialist *Toveritar* newspaper is in front wearing a black collar. Santeri Nuorteva, *Toveri* editor from 1911 to 1913, is standing behind the woman with the black tie. Nuorteva became a top leader in American communism and was later a teacher in Karelia. Photos courtesy of the Editor.



Findings of Fact: Citizenship Denied

Citizenship was denied to some residents of the county during World War I. These were not Germans who were our declared enemy then, but were people who followed events in Russia with a special interest. These were the Socialists who talked of revolution in the United States. Not all Socialist groups advocated the kind of violence that was taking place in Russia, but all were tainted with the images that were coming out of that country. These groups were all seen as the enemy within our borders. It seemed ironic that some of these same people proclaimed that they were anti-war and refused to serve in the American military during the war.

Naturalization records at the courthouse in Astoria include a number of cases in which citizenship was denied on the basis of some relationship to these local Socialist groups. One case involved a man whose name was found listed in the *Toveri*. His Petition for Naturalization noted that on Wednesday, December 18, 1918, the publisher of the *Toveri* issued an edition of the paper with the headline, "With Most Revolutionary Greetings, We Express to Our Comrades a Peaceful Christmas and a Brighter Year for 1919." Below were names of people who paid to have their names listed. Because he had not protested the fact that his name appeared on the list, his naturalization was denied with prejudice for five years by Judge J.A. Eakin.

Another case involved the pressman of the *Toveri*. In September of 1919, he filed a petition to become a citizen. It was denied. Clatsop County Circuit Court Judge J.A. Eakin had the following statement placed in the naturalization records at the courthouse.

In the matter of the Petition of -----
to become a citizen of the United States of America
by Naturalization

ORDER DENYING PETITION WITH PREJUDICE

This petition for naturalization of ----- coming on to be heard in open Court this tenth day of February, 1920, the petitioner and his wife -----, together with the subscribing witnesses to his said petition, appearing in person and the United States of America appearing by V.W. Tomlinson, United States Naturalization Examiner, and the Court, having heard the petitioner in his own behalf and the testimony produced in behalf of the United States of America, and being at this time fully advised in the premises, make the following

FINDINGS OF FACT

That there now is and for many years last past has been published in the city of Astoria, Clatsop County, Oregon, a foreign language newspaper in the Finnish language known and called "Toveri," which said name translated into the English language means "Comrade." Now and for many years last past there has existed in the city of Astoria, Clatsop County, Oregon a foreign language organization known and called "Finnish Socialist Society"; that the aforesaid

newspaper called "Toveri" is the official publication and printed organ of said Finnish socialist Society; that this petitioner for several years was an employee of the publishing company which issues and publishes the said "Toveri", and said petitioner for several years last past has been and now is a member of said foreign language organization called the "Finnish Socialist Society." That during the time when the United States of America was at war with Germany the publishers of the said "Toveri" were indicted and convicted under the terms of that certain Act of Congress known as the "Espionage Act" for publishing and uttering matter disloyal, seditious, against the peace, good order and happiness of the United States of America and of comfort to its enemies; that this petitioner has been an employee and an associate of said publisher and editor so convicted, and has at this hearing condoned the offense of said editor and publisher and sympathized with them and openly approved of the publication in said "Toveri" of utterances prejudicial to the Government of the United States and not disposed to its good order and happiness. Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Court makes this CONCLUSION OF LAW:

That this petitioner, ----- during the five years last past and immediately preceding the date of this filing of this petition of naturalization, has not conducted himself as a person should who is attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States and is well disposed to the good order and happiness of the same, and

It is ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED, that this petition be and the same is hereby denied with prejudice to a renewal thereof by this petitioner for a period of five years from and after the date of this order.

[Signed] J.A. Eakin, Circuit Judge

The pressman did become a citizen a few years later.

Most denials looked like the following:

ORDER OF COURT DENYING PETITION

Upon consideration of the petition of ----- and the motion of N.W. Tomlinson U.S. Naturalization Examiner for the United States in open Court this 15th day of February, 1921, it appearing that petitioner claims exemption from military service in the United States on the ground of alienage and that he is not thereby attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, THE SAID PETITION IS HEREBY DENIED, with prejudice to a renewal thereof for 5 years from and after the date thereof.

[Signed] J.A. Eakins, Judge

On November 11, 1918, the war with Germany finally came to an end. Some 2,086,000 American soldiers had served overseas. As the soldiers began returning home and organized the American Legion, the war front heated up here. Socialists and the I.W.W. were the targets. (The union of the Industrial Workers of the World, familiarly known as "Wobblies" felt that war was exploitation of the worker taken to the extreme.)

The following poem, from the December 28, 1918 *Astoria Evening Budget*, expresses sentiment that often found its way into the Astoria newspapers:

THE MEN WHO WOULDN'T FIGHT

By Charley L. Gant

The black sheep all enlisted and they went and fought in France
And the brave boys who were drafted also took a fighting chance,
And we're proud of all our soldiers whether volunteer or draft,
Who went and manned the trenches and were shot and gassed and gaffed,
And those who were "already yet," to strike the loyal blow,
But were kept here in the training camps and didn't get to go.
The fellows whom we mostly hate, the slacking human punks
Who gave their second papers up, the dirty coward skunks.
They have no place with loyal men, the good men tried by fire,
For every slacking mother's son's a traitor and a liar.
They swore that they would each defend the constitution well,
But in the hour of need they proved the slacking imps of hell.
Deport them to some frozen zone, away from Freedom's light,
The men who gave their papers up, the men who wouldn't fight.
Let every slacking coward go "unhonored and unsung"
For they are mighty lucky dogs, that they escape unhung.
They only love our blessed land alone for gold and gear
And not a slacker voice would give the flag an honest cheer.
Employ them not but give each place to loyal soldier sons,
The boys who followed up the flag and stood behind the guns.
The boys who left their jobs and homes to train up for the fight,
Who laid the rose of pleasure down to grasp the thorns of right."
For these our hearts must prove their love, our larders must provide
When they come marching home again, the brave, the Nation's pride,
For they must work to win their bread and each must have a place,
So leave no job for any slob or slacker to disgrace.
No slacking cur shall trample on a loyal soldier's right,
No cur who gave his papers up, a dog who wouldn't fight.
We love this thing called brotherhood, but let us plainly state,
No slacking traitor holds a job while soldier heroes wait,
The boys who stood by that old flag must have a living chance
When they return from training camps and from the fields of France.
Let not a traitor hold a job they who denied the flag,
They have no love for any land, their only love is "swag,"
No shining star above the fog of battle they behold,
They only see the walls of self and feel the greed of gold.
Come home you honored loyal sons, no traitor holds your place,
You boys who fought the goodly fight to free the human race;
Your comrades they enrich the fields with loyal soldier dust,
While traitors here deny the flag and praise the love of lust.
Deport the slacker to some land where dwells eternal night,
The traitors who denied the flag, the curs who wouldn't fight.

PETITION FOR THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Fifteen years of reprisals taken against the Socialist and Communists took a toll on their membership and instilled fear in many immigrants who were anxious to deny a relationship with them.

CCHS volunteer George Harrison contributed the following letter written by his grandfather, Charles (Kalle) Paakkola:

August 6, 1934

328 Alameda Ave., Astoria, Oregon,

Hon. P.J. Stadelman,
Secretary of State, Salem, Oregon.

Dear Sir:

Referring to a certain petition filed or to be filed with you for the formation of a political party by the name of Communist Party, and in which, I am informed, my name appears as one of the signers, I hereby withdraw my name therefrom and request you to remove it from said petition.

Some time ago, an acquaintance asked me to sign a paper which I understood from him was for the purpose of getting some proposal on the ballot. I had no idea it was for the formation of the Communist Party.

Ever since I have been eligible to vote, I have been and am now a registered member of the Democratic Party, and I have never had and do not nor desire to take part in the formation of a new political party or the Communist Party.

Had I known the contents of said petition I would not have signed.

Therefore I request you to remove my name from said petition. My precinct number is No. 2, Clatsop County.

Please acknowledge receipt hereof and greatly oblige,

Yours very truly,

A response was received from P.J. Stadelman two days later:

Dear Mr. Paakkola:

Salem, Oregon, August 8, 1934

The petition referred to in your letter of August 6th, has not yet been presented to this office. If the same shall be offered for filing here, your request to have your name removed therefrom will be given attention.

Yours very truly,

Signed, P.J. Stadelman

Secretary of State

.....
ED EK

Sylvia Mattson, who passed away about a year ago, used to tell this story about Ed Ek. Ek's name appeared on a list of Communists, perhaps the same mentioned above. He responded by putting an ad in the newspaper, saying: "You Can Call Me a Communist, You Can call Me a Republican, You Can Call Me Anything, Just As Long As You Call Me Your Plumber!"

Worker's Songs

A small book with a red cover and the title, *Raatajain Lauluja*, translated from Finnish as *Workers' Songs* was found in a local rummage sale and is now in the CCHS Archives. The worn book was printed sometime around 1920 by the Workers Socialist Publishing Company of Duluth, Minnesota and was probably used at Socialist meetings in the Astoria area to bring out a spirit of enthusiasm. The words to all the songs are in Finnish. The Socialist hymn "Internationale" written by Eugene Pottier, is the first song in the book. It adopted as the Communist anthem.

The translation below was found on the website: www.edu.au.polsci/marx/int/internationale.

*Arise ye workers from your slumbers
Arise ye prisoners of want
For reason in revolt now thunders
And at last ends the age of cant.
Away with all your superstitions
Servile masses arise, arise
We'll change henceforth the old tradition
And spurn the dust to win the prize.*

*Chorus: (Repeat)
So comrades, come rally
And the last fight let us face
The Internationale unites the human
race.*

*No more deluded by reaction
On tyrants only we'll make war*

*The soldiers too will take strike action
They'll break ranks and fight no more.
And if those cannibals keep trying
To sacrifice us to their pride
They soon shall hear the bullets flying
We'll shoot the generals on our own side.*

*No savior from on high delivers
No faith have we in prince or peer
Our own right hand the chains must
sever
Chains of hatred, greed and fear
E'er the thieves will out with their booty
And give to all a happier lot.
Each at the forge must do their duty
And we'll strike while the iron is hot.*

This song was written to celebrate the new revolutionary communal government in Paris, France in 1871. For a brief period of time, it seemed that the commune would succeed, but it was crushed ruthlessly in what came to be later known as "the Week of Blood," in which thousands of Parisians were slain and much of Paris burned. "In Soviet and Communist mythology," according to Ernest Knapton and Thomas Derry, the authors of *Europe: 1815-1914* (Charles Scribner's and Son's, published in 1965), this was looked upon as "the first great proletarian uprising of modern times."

Most of the songs in the book were written originally in Finnish, but others have been borrowed from music familiar to Americans and translated into Finnish. Songs by Joe Hill* appear throughout the book. They include: "Rebel Girl," "Don't Take My Papa Away From Me," "Workers of the World Awaken," "My Last Will," "There is Power in a Union," and "We'll Sing One Song."

Those passing by the Socialist meetings would have recognized the patriotic tune of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" resounding through the halls. The Finnish words they were hearing, however, were titled: "Workers of the Fatherland."

Other songs in this book include (roughly translated): "Red Soldiers' March," "Red Flag," "Workers' Song," "Slave March," "Strike March," "I.W.W. March," "Lumberjack March," "Red Guard Memorial," and "Joe Hill Memorial." One song is a tribute to Spartacus, a popular symbol of the Socialists. (Spartacus was the leader of a slave revolt against Rome. He died about 71 B.C.)

*Joe Hill, an emigrant from Sweden, was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World union. He became a popular song writer, helping to promote the I.W.W. He was executed in Utah in 1915 for a murder many believe he did not commit, although President Wilson and the Swedish government appealed for clemency.



The next stories are from members of the Hummasti family.

The Hummasti Family

By Wallace Hummasti

The Hummasti family lived in Svensen both before and after their trip to Russia. The father, Abram (1883-1966), worked as a logger in the Svensen area in the early years of the 20th century. After the trip to Russia, he again settled in Svensen, where he remained for the rest of his life. Emilia (Emmi), his wife, died in 1952.

William, who was born on August 16, 1911, served in the U.S. armed forces in World War II. He married three times but had no children. He lived in Kent, Washington for many years while he was employed at Boeing. He retired to Hawaii with his third wife, where he died of a stroke in March 1986.

Henry was born on August 24, 1909 and died on December 18, 1998. He

served in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II in the 347th Engineer Regiment of the army. While stationed in England (before embarking for France and Germany), he met his wife-to-be, Elise "Betty" Myers. After the war, they settled on nine acres in Svensen, where Henry operated a poultry farm for many years. Henry had two children, Wallace and Matthew, who still live at his former home in Svensen.

Paul (born January 24, 1908 and died in April 1965) married Irma Kontas. They had three sons: George, Neil, and Arnold.

Selma (Sally) married Harold Schwab. She had one daughter, Helen. Selma was born on June 24, 1906 and died on January 3, 1992.

Statement of Abram Hummasti

The following was dictated to a translator by Abram Hummasti (the father of Henry, William, Paul, and Selma) about 1940.

I desire to explain the reasons why I took a trip to Europe in 1932. It arose from the fact that as at that time we had the so-called Hoover Depression and I was a subscriber and reader of the *Tyomies* (A Finnish-language Communist newspaper published in the U.S.) and it was always praising how Soviet-Russia was the best place in the world and is a workers' paradise with food and work. I told my sons perhaps we will go there although I knew it was not yet such as this country.

However, I thought if I work hard there, conditions would gradually improve a little at a time, but I saw how greatly I had been deceived when I arrived there.

The first thing I saw when I arrived at Leningrad was about ten men and women fighting desperately over a loaf of black bread; it was like a game played in the United States, football, in which one side tries to take the ball away from the other. But they had a different purpose; they were desperately hungry. I told the boys that this could not be our

new homeland, that I had been in America thirty years and had never gone to bed supperless and even had food to give to others. But to return to the United States was out of [the] question. I had no money and no permit to return to the United States, so there was nothing to do but join the other hungry ones and let Fate bring me to where it deemed best.

And then that terrible dictator [Stalin] who seemed to be every place. If you spoke even a word criticizing the government, your name appeared immediately on the blackboard, and if it appeared two or three times, you were lined against the wall [and shot]. It was there that memories of our free United States came to me, how even our president was slandered and cartooned. I remembered if this was done to Stalin, the perpetrator would be killed immediately, but this was not all. The community where this offense was committed would suffer and its boys know what a precious thing it is that people are free.

I admit I cursed a thousand times during the ten weeks I was compelled to stay there, that a person is a fool who had not become an American citizen in order to get away from that hell, and I swore that if I ever get away from there alive and get back to the country where people are free, I will try to become an American citizen cost what it may. And I will state that a person who has made such a trip will become a loyal citizen. He will not whine against the government even if he is compelled to beg a meal a day. When he is free, he is very contented.

It was like an entry into Heaven when I got away from there to Finland, and it was the same kind of feeling when I got back to the United States. When we first saw the Statue of Liberty and the shores of our freedom, we cheered the Red, White and Blue, and how glad we were to breathe freely once more the air of the land which gives us equality and decent food for our bodies.

The food we had to subsist on in Russia consisted of cabbage water and

black bread, and as I had been accustomed to eat nourishing food in the United States, my stomach threatened to rebel in spite of all efforts although rebellion was forbidden in Russia. But as I had to eat that kind of food, I contracted dysentery and many died therefrom. I suffered two weeks from the disease and when others asked what was ailing me, I told them the disease is leaving me and I will be purified inside and outside. And I am sure the germs of that ailment have left me. And I also got rid of whatever red mania I had, and I am sure it will never appear again. And if anyone does not believe me, let him take that trip and he will certainly [get] rid of the red disease or mania.

I do not regret the trip at all although I lost my thirty years' earnings. It was a good school for myself and my children, and the children say they could not have received such an education in America even with money, and they now know that there is something terrible in the world which they could not have imagined.

There are many more terrible things I could tell about but will close now with the thought that I have written this after having at last become an American citizen and that no person will suspect me of being afflicted with the red disease or mania.*

Respectfully,
Abram Hummasti
Route 2, Box 396
Astoria, Oregon

"Red disease" or "mania" and "Karelian fever" refer to the intense desire of Finnish-Americans to go to Karelia to become part of the communes that were being established there in the 1920s and 1930s.

Karelian Fever

By Henry Hummasti

The material below came from a taped interview of Henry Hummasti in 1987, by his nephew, Arnold Hummasti, a teacher and librarian at Ferndale Washington. This is a condensed version. A copy of the original tape is in the CCHS Archives.

It was pretty rough in Svensen in 1932 before we left for Karelia. There wasn't much work. We heard that conditions were better over there and we thought we'd go over and see if it was. I was 22 years old. My brother, Bill, was a couple years younger. My brother, Paul, was the only one who didn't go. I guess he thought that things there were not quite up to snuff. My folks and sister also went. Bill and I decided to leave earlier for New York and thought we'd save money by taking freight trains there. We left on the 28th of July 1932 out of Vancouver, Washington. They say there were nine hundred people on the train, men, women and children, that's how bad conditions were. They all were looking for a better place. Many people were headed for Russia. Among those from Astoria were Wilho Pelto and Toini Oja and her folks who went at the same time.

Bill stayed on in New York for a while. He was a member of the radical group and stayed with comrades there. They loaned him money for the trip. He was to pay them back in rubles he would earn by working in Russia. Selma, my folks and I arrived in Russia in September and Bill in October. The crossing took nine days from New York to Leningrad via Gothenberg, Sweden. We went third class, paying \$98, but had the run of the ship. We landed in Leningrad. From there we took a train to

Petrozavodsk. The train cars looked like they came straight out of the 1860s.

Most of the people were pretty disappointed when they got there. When my brother, Bill, arrived, my dad said, "Why the Hell did you come here?"

There were several communes around Petrozavodsk. We went to one about 90 kilometers toward Finland from there. Bill went to a different commune. The roads were so primitive, they reminded me of the Oregon Trail. We had quite a time with lots of dancing. We had lots of meetings you had to attend. If you didn't, you got into trouble. They put your name up on the blackboard.

I worked on logging. The logs were skidded up on a stack, 300 to 400 to a stack. In the spring, they were floated down the river. We had wooden bunks with sawdust for beds. It was pretty rough to lay on. Two army soldiers came by with two prisoners. There were so many of them trying to escape into Finland, risking getting shot.

We were paid six rubles a day, 180 a month. You couldn't do much with the money. There was nothing to spend it on.

Selma was in Karelia for only a couple weeks and then she left with another family for Finland. She had no trouble getting out. They let her go because they said she was just like a parasite.

One day, my boss told me I had to turn my passport in to the post office to go out in the mail. So I did, but Timonen who was from Ilwaco, Washington, told me not to give it to them because I would lose my American citizenship if I did. I rushed to the post office and told that postmistress that I forgot to put something in it. Then I kept it. Toini Oja

let them have her passport and they would not let her leave.

The food was very poor. We had sour cabbage soup, tea, milk and sour black bread that was kind of rough to get used to. We stayed in a monastery where the monks had buried their own underneath the church. The ground was dug out and potatoes were planted in it with the bones. They had a cigarette stuck in the jaw of one skull. That was pretty bad.

The return

My dad's job was to make coals out of wood for the blacksmith. Mother ran the sauna on a lake. She was kind of sick. I used to help her carry the water. My dad told his boss that he wanted take my mother to Finland and he would return, but he never intended to. They got permission to leave and took the train to Rajajoki on the border where all the passengers were searched. They found a gold piece on my father and took it, giving him a receipt. So they got out.

Bill wasn't very happy in Karelia. He worked with a blacksmith from Woodland, Washington. They even had to make nails sometimes because they didn't have them.

It was in the latter part of October or November that I began to think of leaving. Bill and I met at Petroskoy [Petrozavodsk]. We went to the Timber Trust for permission to leave. I told them I was not feeling well. There wasn't much resistance to us leaving. They stamped my passport. We went to the railway station to get tickets. I asked for two tickets in Swedish. I didn't know much Russian and didn't want to end up in some out of way part of Russia. The train was so crowded. Red Army men were at the ends of the train with their prisoners. We had to walk by them to go to the restroom.

Just as it got dark, we passed by a big canal full of humans working on it. They looked just like ants. [*The Belomor Canal was built from the White Sea to the Baltic Sea by over 100,000 slave-*

labor prisoners equipped with axes, wheelbarrows and hatchets under the harshest of conditions. It was built in twenty months between 1931 and 1933. Tens of thousands of prisoners died in the process. From the webpage: www.osa.cen.hu/gulag/txt1.htm.]

At Leningrad, it was so cold on the train that the windows iced over. It was about the 10th of January. We stayed there all day. The Finnish train was supposed to come from Helsinki. The G.P.U. man [the Russian secret police] kept his eye on us. He took us to a back room and asked to see our passports and I thought, "Here, we go again." We tried to look like we weren't scared and he let us go. We waited for the train and got on. The conductor asked to see the passports and then told us that we could not get on the train without a visa. We would have to go to the Finnish Consul to get it. We thought, "What now?"

We had to wait until the next morning, so we started walking the streets and went to below the street pubs. We thought that if we got stopped now, then that was the last of our trip. A couple walking ahead of us was speaking English. They were from Canada. They took us to their apartment and fed us a little of what food they had and found us a place to stay in a hotel. We had to leave our passports at the desk.

The next morning, we got them back. It took quite a while but we finally got visas. We walked around. Everything was frozen. The train finally came and it was nice to get in the sleeping car. The train stopped at Rajajoki and we were checked. I showed them the receipt for the gold that was taken from my dad. They looked at it and kind of snickered I didn't push it because I didn't want to get in trouble.

We got to Viipuri which was a part of Finland then. We didn't have much money. I had \$10 American money that I got for a bed I had sold in Russia to a man who couldn't leave. Bill didn't have any American money. We went to the



Courtesy of the Hummasti Family
Henry Hummasti (1909-1998)

American consul at Helsinki. He was from Oregon City. He said that they only help American sailors who are stranded. We had enough money to go to Kemi where my mother and dad were. Selma had already left for America with some Canadians. Paul had to sell his car to get money for her to get back to the States. Paul and lawyer [A.A.] Anderson helped my parents get permission to come back to the U.S. because they weren't citizens.

At Kemi, the temperature was from 35 to 40 degrees below. We stayed there quite a while. The American consul said that if we got to Sweden, they would

have to send us on to the U.S. We went to Turku, Finland and took the ship. We got a room in the old part of Stockholm. We had a little money to eat and went to the American consul there. He told us to turn to the Swedish authorities and they took us in tow. We stayed at an old sailors' home. They put us to work splitting birch wood. A newspaper man from Stockholm talked to us and took our picture then gave us a *kroner* (Swedish money). The next day they had our picture in the newspaper and the whole story. That was about April 1933.

We were there six weeks until they could get us passage. Finally, they told us they found a ship to take us. We went through Sweden on electric trains. At Gothenburg, someone met us and took us to the ship, a Swedish freighter, Swedish-American-Mexican line. We were to get off at the first port in the U.S. And at Portland, Maine, we started hitchhiking and riding the trains.

It was nip and tuck for us getting out of Russia. If we weren't so young, we probably wouldn't have made it.

There were a lot of people there from Oregon and Washington. Mr. Puustinen from Svensen, Bill Puustinen's father, was a radical. He wanted to go to Russia but his family didn't. He went over and was some kind of guard. He didn't care for it and got in some kind of trouble and was shot.

There were so many good folks who couldn't get back. We heard from Toini Oja years later. She said that she wished she could walk the streets of Astoria once more. ♦

Soviet Karelia

By William Hummasti in 1940

(The complete article is at CCHS.)

When Finland won her war of Independence twenty-two years ago, speculation relative to her success as an inde-

pendent nation in contrast to what might have been her destiny as a Soviet State resulted in some division of opinion

especially among the Finnish American population. Those who championed the Soviet cause held that the Finnish people would have written a glorious page of achievement had they accepted and furthered the doctrines of Marx and Lenin as interpreted by Joseph Stalin.

Throughout the years, Communist newspapers strongly upheld this contention pointing with pride to Russia's continued efforts toward world peace; to her hatred of imperialistic aggression and to her successful five year plans that supposedly raised her standards of living to a pinnacle unexcelled by the rest of the world.

A few weeks ago, however, with the Russian invasion of Poland, the stage was being prepared for a new act in the Soviet drama. The first Russian bomb to shatter the peace of Helsinki rang up the curtain on this new scene. With the whole world as an audience Joseph Stalin and Company revealed themselves in their true roles, ready and eager to play their well-rehearsed parts on a stage already crimson with the blood of Finland's first victims.

The so-called defender of the World Proletariat, the friend of the oppressed and exploited, in short the Fatherland of the working class had extended the workers and peasants of Finland a formal invitation to gather under the protective wing of the Soviet.

According to a Moscow dispatch, the Finns were ready to receive the Red Army with open arms. The Finnish army has already proved to the world that the dispatch should have read "with loaded arms."

An examination of conditions existing in Soviet Karelia, I feel, will reveal to the reader conditions that will exist in any land under Russian domination.

Laborers invited to Russia

In 1929 following the Wall Street crash, an agency was established in New

York City to recruit foreign labor to help build Socialism in the Soviet Union. This agency headed by Finnish Communists went calmly to work in obtaining recruits for migration to Russia. To insure the success of their venture they chose a time when not only the United States but the whole world began to feel the effects of a devastating Depression.

Utilizing their press with paid agents in the field, they painted glowing pictures of Russia's destiny as a leader of the "World Proletariat," paving the way to a world free of exploitation, unemployment and war.

Through a study of Marxist theory and tactics I had prepared myself to believe that here truly rested the salvation of the world toiler. The stronger this conviction became the stronger also grew my resolve to one day see this land that had adopted the Marxist maxim—"From each according to his ability and to each according to his need."

Migrants fleeced

Up to and including the year 1932, these aforementioned opportunists had succeeded in obtaining permits for hundreds of families from the United States and Canada to migrate to Soviet Karelia. This agency dealt with Finnish workers who they claimed would more readily acclimate themselves to conditions in Karelia, and would not face severe language handicaps owing to the fact that many of their countrymen were already in positions of trust in this northern republic. To all those showing interest in this migration, the agency promptly forwarded questionnaires. Applicants must be between the reasonable ages, they must furnish health certificates, but the main qualification, however, was that they must have money. One of the most important questions to be answered by each applicant was—"How much money can you spare for the machine fund of the Soviet Union?" As this fund was intended for the purchase of badly needed

machinery for the Karelian Republic, the anxious applicant naturally saw his chances for migration enhanced if he could afford a generous contribution to this fund.

As it is, Karelia is still in sad need of this machinery, and the machine fund with its thousands of dollars of voluntary contributions is still as far away from Russia as the men who collected it.

All families obtaining permits for migration were invariably warned that they must arrive in New York at least two weeks or so before embarkation. This gave the agency and its various branches a few days to clean up on the remaining finances of its recruits. Apartment houses and clothing stores had already been contracted by the agents who were always ready to direct business into channels that promised them a cut in the profits. Thus all migrating families were housed in apartments that charged them roundly for the rent and the thousands of dollars spent for clothing and supplies rolled into the tills of a few selected department stores that had advertised sales for this occasion.

The agency was well prepared to take charge of its recruits and their affairs. In their headquarters at 15 W. 126th Street [in New York], they owned a cafeteria whose facilities at times were severely taxed in handling the thriving business.

Two dance floors in their six story building in addition to a pool room, steambath and swimming pool kept the cash registers ringing a merry tune at least eighteen hours a day.

Immediately upon their arrival in New York, the migrating families were made to feel that upon their embarkation, they were leaving certain vital responsibilities behind. These responsibilities, it was explained, were to the American working class. "You, who are journeying to the Soviet Fatherland, are about to enjoy the blessings of freedom and

equality purchased with the blood of your comrades over there, while we who are remaining to carry on the struggle in Capitalistic America are faced with your loss from our ranks, therefore any material assistance you can leave behind will be another concerted thrust against the tyranny of capitalism."

This "material assistance" was left behind on numerous collection lists. There were benefit lists for the numerous papers and periodicals that were to carry on this struggle, benefit lists for the aid of political prisoners; lists for the aid of defense organizations who in turn were to aid the prisoners, in short, there were so many deserving benefits that it took a well stocked pocket book to give "material assistance" to the cause.

Even the "down and outers" had deserted their benches in Mt. Morris park to present themselves as the pitiful handiwork of capitalistic economy and received contributions that probably reinstated their belief in Santa Claus.

This "material assistance" theme was carried right on to the deck of the departing steamer. That they may be properly received in the Fatherland, the departing recruits eagerly purchased red handkerchiefs at seventy-five cents a piece with which to wave out their old life and wave in the new.

Last decent meal

With Kronstadt behind, the passengers busied themselves with final preparations for disembarkation at Leningrad. On the voyage from Stockholm to Leningrad, the steamship company was represented by an agent who helped iron out any difficulties that might arise during the voyage. During the last meal on shipboard, he aroused the ire of the passengers with his admonition to eat hearty, for as he put it- "This will be your last decent meal for many a day, so take advantage of it while you can." A gentleman from Canada took up the challenge and referred to this remark as

a “damnable lie,” a final capitalistic slur intended to discredit the cause of the world toiler. With the ship already in Russian waters, the time was rapidly drawing nigh when the passengers themselves could test the truth of this remark and of many others that had been advanced both pro and con since the Russian Revolution.

The arrival of the pilot tug and a government motor boat bearing uniformed immigration officials was the first tangible evidence to our proximity to Soviet Leningrad.

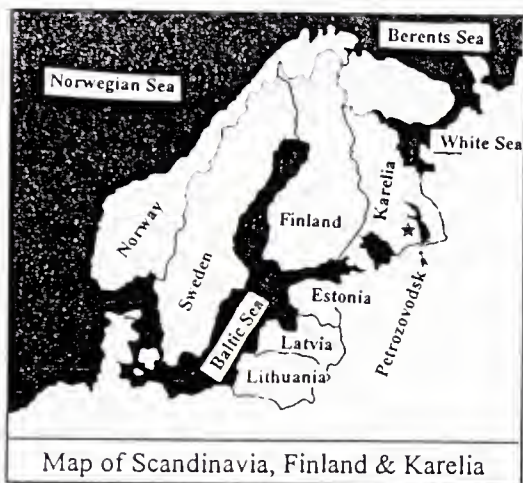
The examination undergone by foreigners upon their arrival in the Soviet Union, I believe I am safe in saying, is stricter than that accorded by any other country in the world. In the first place, a capitalistic newspaper does not leave the customs house. All books and papers are thoroughly examined to make sure that no subversive propaganda enters the country.

An official thumbing the pages of a world atlas belonging to one of my friends suddenly laid the book before him on the desk and very intently scrutinized the pictures that faced him. Two full-paged pictures of the United States Army and Navy on parade engaged his attention, and obviously made the book in the eyes of the official an important military document resulting in its examination in higher circles. The official returned shortly with the book, spoke a few words in Russian including the term *horoshaw* which I learned later was equivalent to our “okay.”

During the entire examination, the

officials showed but little regard to personal properties as evidenced by articles strewn on the floor during the inspection. Some of the passengers showed faint signs of disapproval of the methods employed in inspection, but they had already forgotten that this was indeed the land where terms such as “me” and “mine” must be replaced by “we” and “ours.” Special attention was given to articles such as typewriters, sewing machines, guns, musical instruments, in short, anything that might be conscripted for public use. The number of the machine or gun along with the owner’s name and sex were carefully recorded,

for now these articles were public property and could be claimed by the government at any time. Whenever a demand arose for any of these registered articles, the government would call them in and compensate the owner with the little valued paper ruble.



The new homeland

Out of the noise and confusion of the customs house, we stepped into the noisier, heavily trafficked atmosphere of the street. A heavy flow of horse-drawn vehicles moving in both directions gave rise to an incessant rumble, as the iron wheels bounced and jolted over the uneven surface of the cobblestoned street. Speeding motor trucks splashed mud right and left.

Those of our party who still had a few American dollars were able to purchase coffee at the local Torgsin store. In the cooking and consuming of this

coffee, I witnessed one of the most pitiful scenes of communal living and sharing that I ever expect to see. The large brick stove in the station barracks that had a fireplace opening into each of its three rooms, was the only suitable and available place for brewing coffee amongst its occupants. Before these open fires, those who had coffee went about brewing it in as much secrecy as possible so as not to arouse the envy of the big majority who were not so fortunate. The permeating odor of coffee, however, found its way into all three rooms and many a man, who a few short weeks before had gladly subscribed to the various lists in New York, found himself cursing these deceptive agents and enemies of the working class under his breath.

A few small children, whose parents still had the necessary means, were provided with milk. As is only natural, one child wants what the other child gets. Many a mother was faced with the difficult and distasteful task of explaining to her small charges why they must not clamor for milk.

Petrozavodsk is a city with a population of approximately fifty thousand. It is located on the shore of Lake Onega and is prominent as a distribution center for the important logging activities carried on in the surrounding forests. The Onega munitions factory is the largest payroll in the city, employing some four thousand workers. Five hundred workers, many of whom are foreigners, are employed in the ski factory while other groups of foreigners were employed in the building trades and in the two saw-mills of Petrozavodsk.

The city has no sewage or water system. Water was taken from the lake and from numerous wells about the city, while the waste and sewage was transported in horse-drawn carts to a dump in the outskirts of the town. It takes but little imagination to picture the danger

and hardship visited upon the population by the absence of these two essential public services. The health department posted signs about the city warning the populace of the consequences of drinking unboiled water. Even so, the death rate from typhoid was exceedingly high.

The "norm"

In Russia, all workers exist on a ration, called the "norm," and unless one has foreign money or gold, he cannot increase the commodities that make up his norm. There are several different levels in the quantity and quality of the norms dealt out to the various classes of people.

The first, or poorest, is the Russian norm, consisting mainly of black bread, tea, cabbage soup, and small quantities of meat. The second is the foreigners norm handled by the Insab Food Trust which distributes food to all foreign workers in Russia. This included more meat, some canned goods, small portions of butter and sugar in addition to the Russian norm.

The engineers' and specialists' norm is somewhat better than the first two listed. Those who rated high in political position and power naturally enjoyed living conditions in keeping to their importance in the social and political scale.

Workers' paradise

The radio stations throughout Russia were continually carrying their gospel to all the countries of Europe. Glowing pictures were painted of the advancements made by the Russian working class. Unemployment, it was explained, was just an evil capitalistic word that had no place in the economic vocabulary of the Soviet. In many languages, the news floated over the airways informing the people of Europe of the constantly rising wages and lowering prices being enjoyed by the citizens of Russia.

Convict labor

The radio station at Petrozavodsk

was constantly carrying on this propaganda for the benefit of the people in Finland. As Finland borders Soviet Karelia, hundreds of Finnish workers crossed the border illegally into the Karelian Republic. For illegal entry into the country, they were immediately placed into prison camps where they were detained for six months for the ostensible purpose of determining if there are any subversive elements within their ranks. At the end of six months, they were placed in Russian camps receiving the Russian norm. These prisoners were all placed to work in various capacities. Some were sent to the lime quarries located on islands in Lake Onega, while others were forced to peel pulpwood in the Karelian forests.

Some years ago, communist newspapers hotly contended that no convict labor was employed in the lumber industries of Karelia. It was a common sight, however, in this northern republic to see convict gangs being escorted by Red soldiers from one job to the other.

I had occasion to interview many of the men who had been introduced to Soviet life in the prison camps. Many of their comrades had died of exposure and lack of nourishing food during the cold winter months of their enforced stay in the Karelian labor camps. During my second month in Karelia, I visited one of these camps while on my way to the experiment station of Padozero. The supply truck operating between Petrozavodsk and Padozero, on this occasion, delivered secondhand clothing to the populace of the prison camp. These articles of clothing were dumped unceremoniously in the snow precipitating a scramble amongst the prisoners in their efforts to salvage such clothing that might prove useful.

Even during the coldest days of winter, many of these prisoners risked their lives in attempting to ski through the wide, trackless forests to Finland.



Courtesy of the Hummasti Family
William Hummasti (1911-1986)

Almost every city and town in Finland has seen the return of some of these adventurers who have brought fresh news from the Autonomous Republic of Karelia.

Workers' Trusts

All the laborers hired in the Karelian Republic were in the employ and under the jurisdiction of various trusts. The largest and most powerful of these was the Karelles Logging Trust in direct charge of all logging operations. The building trust embraced all workers engaged in the building trades. In order to speed up production in the industrial field, "socialistic competition" was introduced between the various branches of these trusts.

"Shock brigades" led by shock brigadiers, set up the pace in factory, farm and forest, and as a reward for meritorious service in the field of labor, many received the Order of Lenin. This nationally adopted speed-up system

caused severe hardships to those employees who could not keep the pace set by the shock brigades. Even though all workers are members of the various trade unions, they are strictly forbidden the right to strike.

The officials of these trade unions receive their instructions at conventions of the Supreme Council of Soviets who outline the amount of work expected from each individual trust.

All workers are expected to spend at least two evenings a week at political meetings, and any continued absence from these affairs results in an investigation by the O.G.P.U. During the celebration of the November Revolution, all workers in Petrozavodsk and vicinity were required to march in the parades under the banner of their trade union. This same policy is in effect throughout the entire Soviet Union, resulting in mammoth parades during these days of celebration.

Although Karelia was supposedly granted her autonomy following the Russian Revolution, nevertheless, the output of her various trusts and their conduct was directly governed by Moscow.

The strong arm of the Soviet dictatorship held this northern republic under its thumb in the agency of the famous O.G.P.U. and the Red Army, both answerable to Moscow. The Russian secret police play a role similar to that of the Gestapo in Germany and are a vital factor in the enforcement of decrees originating in the Soviet capitol.

Classes in a classless society.

The advocates of the Soviet system have long contended that under the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat, all workers receive equal pay for equal work. In Karelia, I visited a land clearing project where the foreigners thus employed received six rubles a day while the Karelians similarly engaged received three. At that time, a pair of shoes in

Petrozavodsk cost forty rubles. A pair of the standard leather boots commanded a price of ninety rubles. In consideration of these facts, it was not at all surprising to see so many of the Karelian natives clad in shoes fashioned from birch bark.

The Soviet system was supposed to have eliminated classes as a factor in their present social set up. On the contrary, the methods in food rationing alone gave rise to as many classes as there were different types of rations. The shock brigadiers were a class in themselves, and as such, would dine at tables barred to the ordinary worker who hadn't the desire or the ability to become a brigadier.

Then again, there was a distinct class of office workers who held what might be termed non-existent jobs through "pull" or favoritism. They were known to the workers as "brief case" moguls. Wherever they appeared in public, they constantly carried their briefcases and made every effort to appear as official as possible. In the office, however, they were to be found grouped around the samovar enjoying their tea, and on the outside, they could usually be found in the crowded vodka line. These briefcase moguls are not to be confused with the regular office workers. The Karelles Logging Trust ousted a hundred and ten of these parasites at one time.

Much has been said and written about the freedom enjoyed by the masses in Russia. A worker can change his employment and move to another location only when such action is approved by the State. If he does move, he must apply for a passport, and it is very essential that he report to the proper authorities when he arrives at his new location. He can read and write only such material that is considered good for himself and the state.

He is under continual surveillance of the O.G.P.U., and any behavior on his part that might be construed as suspicious is immediately investigated. In

other words, he exists for the state and is but a cog in a mighty machine that rolls when and where the drivers fancy might dictate.

These are the conditions that I found and left in the Autonomous Republic of Karelia.

Concluding Note

During the winter of 1933, I spent two and a half months in Finland. I visited most of the large cities and made a trip as far north as Rovaniemi. The clean

orderly cities, the well-dressed people, the efficiency of their progress provided a striking contrast to conditions I had witnessed a few short miles away in Soviet Karelia.

The atmosphere of "martial law" was not present here. One could walk through the markets of Helsinki, through the beautiful railroad station: he could enter any public place without rubbing elbows with heavily armed and bayoneted soldiers of the Republic. ☆

Searching for Oscar Ruukki

By Bob Peterson

About thirty-five years ago, I became interested in finding out what happened to my grandfather Oskar Ruukki who was Finnish. According to stories told by my relatives, Oskar abandoned his wife and their eight children to live with another woman in the Seattle/Tacoma area. He was last seen around Seattle. After much research, I still don't know for sure what happened to him, if he had any other children or where he died. I've talked to my relatives in Finland. They never heard from him either and he was declared dead in 1976, in Helsinki, as a kind of formality, I guess.

I learned from information in the Heritage Museum's Archives that he was a member of the Socialist Party in Ilwaco, Washington. I have often wondered if he had gone to Karelia, as that is where he came from, at Viipuri, or Viborg, as it is now known. Karelia is in Russian territory.

Oskar's son, Eugene (Gene) Rouke, and his cousin went to Karelia in the 1930s as did many of the Finns in the Astoria area. They were reluctant to talk about their experiences there as there was a stigma attached to the socialists and communists. They were both elderly when I heard about their experiences in Karelia.

In the United States, during the Depression, people were desperate. The Rus-

sians promised a better life for people who would sign up to go to Karelia to offer their experience there and work. The Russians had a five-year economic plan that sounded good to many desperate people. Many went.

My uncle Gene had an old Model T Ford which they fixed up and he and his cousin drove it to New York. They gave the car to someone and boarded a ship to Karelia. As they were experienced fishermen, they expected to be put to work on boats and to be fishing. That was not what happened! Gene, who was not a farmer, was put to work on a farm raising potatoes. He said that was about all he ate, too. Chuck Saari (Puusaari) was sent to the north country by the big lake, Ladoga, and put to work in a logging camp, something he had never done before, either! It was hard, but he tried. All he got to eat, though, was black rye bread which he could not keep down and he was sick most of the time. After about six months, they decided they had enough and wanted to leave. The Russians would not let them go if they couldn't pay their way out. They were broke, so they wrote relatives in Finland. One, a taxi driver, loaned Gene enough money to get to Finland. Chuck had relatives in the Vaasa area who helped him. Eventually, they got back to the West



Courtesy of Bob Peterson

The Ruukki Family about 1911.

Dates of birth: Marge 1907; Gene 1908; Julie, the mother, 1879 holding baby Arne, 1911; Axel, 1905; Oscar, the father, 1882 holding Robert, 1909; and Helen, 1906.

Coast of the U.S. I don't believe they ever went more than two hundred miles away from home again. They fished together and had a nice boat built and after fishing it for almost thirty years, they retired. I bought the boat and fished it for a few more years, but by that time, the fishing was about all gone.

I have done a lot of research and found this was a typical story for many of the people who succumbed to the "Karelian Fever." Most of those have passed on. One of the last I knew was Henry

Hummasti, who recently died at the age of about eighty-five.

Several good books about this period have been written by Mamie Sevander. One is *They Took My Father*, and another is *The Red Exodus*.

I would very much like to talk to anyone who knows more of this story and about this period of time. You can get in touch with me through CCHS at (503) 325-2203 or write to me c/o CCHS, 1618 Exchange, Astoria, OR 97103.



The plan to attract Finnish speaking people to Karelia to develop that "republic" into a showcase of the Russian Socialist Republic was developed by Edvard Gylling who believed that timber from the forests of that region could be sold and the money used to fund revolution in Scandinavia. Gylling was able to persuade N. Lenin to allow him to begin putting his ideas into practice. An immigration bureau was set up to recruit labor for Karelia and succeeded in attracting large numbers of people to the area. After the death of Lenin in 1924, Stalin concentrated power in his own hands. Fearful of losing control, he purged the country of every imagined enemy, including thousands of Finnish immigrants. Gylling's ideas were repudiated, and in 1937, he was executed, followed by many others including those involved in the labor recruitment. Only now are memorials being erected over mass graves which dot the area around Petrozavodsk.

Editor's Notes

By Liisa Penner

Correction

Ray Horton, son of R.A. Horton, the photographer we spotlighted in the last issue of *Cumtux*, stopped by to pick up a couple extra issues of the magazine and leave a correction. On the inside front cover I had mis-identified his father, confusing the name R.A. for Ray. The R. in R.A. is the initial for Ralph. (Hope I have this right!)

Sensitive Subject

The subject of socialists and communists in Clatsop County has been pretty much off-limits for decades except for Walter Mattila's book on *Theater Finns* and Paul George Hummasti's amazing book, *Radical Finns in Astoria*. Mattila's book was published over 28 years ago now and Hummasti's book 21 years ago. The Oregon Historical Society brought the subject out in the open again in the Winter 1995/1996 issue of their *Quarterly* with Hummasti's article, "Ethnicity and Radicalism: the Finns of Astoria and the *Toveri*, 1890-1930." With the new millennium upon us, it is hoped that this issue can finally be examined here on our home ground and that people will come forward with their stories. The information they have may help others. Bob Peterson, whose story appears on the page opposite, told me that he had spent many hours at the Senior Center in Astoria talking to Henry Hummasti. In all that time, he never realized that Henry had been to Karelia. Had he known, he would have asked Henry if he had heard of his grandfather.

The Continuation War

Varpu Lindstrom's new book, *From Heroes to Enemies: Finns in Canada, 1937-1947*, explores many topics that have some relevance to our county. She contrasts two periods of time: the 1939-1940 Winter War between Russia and Finland and the Continuation War, 1941 to 1944, when Finland was an ally of Hitler's Germany and aided that country in its war with Russia. In the first war, Finland was greatly admired for its courage in defending itself against the giant bully of a neighbor. But in the Continuation War, Finnish-Canadians were seen as a possible threat to the security of Canada.

In her interviews with Canadian-Finnish women, she asked these questions: How did non-Finns feel towards the Finns in Canada during the Continuation War? How did Finnish-Canadians view their relationship to their mother country and what were their obligations to her? What restrictions were placed on Canadian-Finns? What were the plans for future restrictions? How did the Finnish-Canadians react to them? How did the war change the ways in which Finnish-Canadian political groups interact? Did the fact that Russia was an ally of Canada increase membership in the socialist and communist organizations there? Was speaking Finnish in public frowned upon? What was the reaction when Britain bombed Finland during the war?

Varpu's book can be purchased from Aspasia Books, R.R. 1, Beaverton, Ontario L0K 1A0, Canada for \$19 plus postage.

Iron Pants

Another book worth considering is *Iron Pants: Oregon's Anti-New Deal Governor, Charles Henry Martin*. This book by Gary Murrell is published by the Washington State University Press and sells for \$22.95. According to their flyer, Gov. Martin formed a secret Red Squad within the Oregon State Police which operated up and down the West Coast in the mid 1930s.



The Astoria Finnish Socialist Club (A.S.S.K.) is at the center and the Karhuvaara Boarding House (still standing) is at right. The Club's hall was built in 1910 and burned in 1923. It was located on the next block west of the Suomi Hall.

**Clatsop County Historical Society
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